

# Canadian Firms Tackle Pfizer's Smoking Cessation Drug

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Vancouver, BC: Dozens of Canadians have joined the long list of people suing for personal injuries allegedly caused by the smoking cessation drug **Chantix**. Class actions against Pfizer and its Canadian subsidiary have been filed in the provinces of Ontario, Quebec, British Columbia and Alberta.



Lawyer David Klein from the Vancouver-based firm of Klein Lyons says his firm first began to hear complaints from Canadians about Chantix last fall. "We started to look at the case and realized there was a problem with the drug in terms of the number of people affected and with the adequacy of the warnings," Klein says.

Known as Champix in Canada and as Chantix in the US, the drug has been linked to suicidal thoughts, psychotic episodes and even suicide since it was first introduced to the market several years ago.

The suits Klein has filed against Pfizer allege that the drugmaker knew or ought to have known about the dangers of the drug, and failed to properly warn Canadians of the risks.

"It is essentially a failure to warn case," says Klein. "There are some questions about the efficacy as balanced against the harm the drug causes. And our clients feel that drug is too dangerous to be on the market given its purpose and the alternatives that are available."

The lead plaintiff in the British Columbia class action is the mother of the late Heidi Clow, a 22-year-old who committed suicide after using Chantix for only a few months. Another plaintiff from Princeton, BC had such strong suicidal thoughts that she seriously injured herself after driving her car into an oncoming logging truck. And another of Klein's clients, Alicia Pickering of Sechelt, BC, began a downward spiral into a depression so debilitating she had to be hospitalized and leave her job began within days of starting Chantix. "If it saves even one soul from suffering the way I have, it'll be worth it," Pickering told her legal team. "I am outraged that this drug remains on the market."

Since the drug came on the market in Canada in 2007, at least 1178 adverse reactions have been reported to Health Canada. Although Health Canada promised to strengthen the warning labels, it has so far failed to do so.

"Something that is perplexing to us, is that the warnings [regarding use of the drug] are stronger in the US than the warnings in Canada," says Klein.

Klein Lyons is currently seeking class action certification for the suits. No damage amounts have yet been attached to the complaints.

Hundreds of similar suits are already underway in the US.

*David Klein is a name partner with the firm of Klein Lyons, which has offices in Vancouver and Toronto. Klein has recovered millions of dollars for clients in a number of landmark lawsuits over the last 20 years in the areas of defective drugs and medical devices, securities misrepresentations, pension and retirement benefits, institutional negligence and environment class actions. He is recognized by Best Lawyers in Canada as a leader in class action litigation.*